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THE FOLKTALE IN ANCIENT LITERATURE

IV

WE SHALL never know just what tales were told around the campfires by the hosts drawn up before Troy or by the sailors who brought the Queen of Sheba to Solomon's court. The slaves who built the Pyramids doubtless stole time from their tasks to listen to stories, and priests and wise men of that age certainly entertained nobles and kings with real or imagined adventures. This we have a right to assume if the ancients were like other men. But nearly all direct account of this activity has vanished with the centuries.

And yet we are not utterly ignorant of the folktales of antiquity. In two ways we learn not only of their existence, but something of their place in the life of the age, and often have a clear enough indication of the action of the stories themselves. Frequently in ancient literature mention is made of tales which were current among the people of the time. Moreover, in a large number of the literary monuments of the ancient world appear stories undoubtedly based on current tradition.

Johannes Bolte has assembled about thirty-five passages from the literature of Greece and Rome¹ which show the use of the folktale among those peoples. References begin with Aristophanes' *Wasps* of 422 B.C. In a number of these we see clearly enough that these tales resembled in many ways the folktales current today in Europe. They told of fairies and monsters and marvels. A frequent term used for them is "old women's stories," and authors keep referring to the telling of these tales to children.

Many of these oral folktales we find embedded in some literary classic to which it has been adapted both in form and spirit. Where oral tales are thus found we always have two possibilities. (1) The ancient classic is the original

¹ Bolte-Polívka. IV, 40-94.

from which the present day oral forms have been borrowed, or (2) the story in the ancient classic is merely one version (perhaps with literary elaboration) of a widespread oral tale already in existence.

Though there can be no doubt that some ancient stories—particularly the Aesopic fables—are purely literary in origin, the probability of an oral tradition back of many of the best known of the classic tales is very strong. Such of these as have been subjected to comparative study show that the literary retelling by the ancient author is chiefly valuable not for furnishing the original of the story but for showing the way in which traditional material has been adapted to different religious or literary patterns. Particularly interesting is the elaboration of such tales or motifs under the influence of religious cults and their assimilation into a well-integrated system of mythology.

I. ANCIENT EGYPTIAN

FROM ancient Egypt we have several collections of tales which have been preserved on papyri.² These show rather clearly a traditional background in many respects resembling that found in the oral literature of present-day Europe and western Asia. Most of them are obviously the work of priests, and the tales probably fail in two ways to give us a true indication of the exact content or style of an oral narrative of that era. Generally the stories are not well integrated and suggest that the writer had a very imperfect understanding of the action. The tales are given a definitely Egyptian setting and are closely related not only to the known history and geography of Egypt but to its religious conceptions and practices as well. On the other hand, they are so clearly related to folk tradition outside of Egypt that they are valuable indications of the antiquity of many of our oral motifs and even of complete tale types.

The earliest of these surviving Egyptian tales, dating from about 2000-1700 B.C., is that of the Shipwrecked Man. An Egyptian sailing in the Red Sea is shipwrecked, and he alone of all on the ship escapes drowning. He is cast up on a lonely island which is inhabited by a king of the spirits in the form of a serpent. The latter receives him kindly and succeeds after four months in having a passing ship rescue him, but meantime tells him of his own misfortunes and predicts that his days are numbered and that the island will sink into the sea. Mention is also made (without explanation) of an earthly maiden who had formerly lived on the island but had perished along with the family of the king of the spirits. The story is so confused that it seems hardly possible that the man who wrote it in its present form understood its motivation. The hero is said to have been in great fear before the giant serpent, who is so kind to him. The role of the maiden is left unex-

² See G. Maspero, *Les contes populaires de l'Égypte ancienne* (Paris, 1882); W. M. F. Petrie, *Egyptian Tales* (2 vols., London, 1899).

plained and undeveloped. Are we dealing with the tale of an ogre and the rescue of a girl, as in the folktale of today? Whatever may be the answer to these speculations, the tale seems to point unmistakably to the existence of folktales much like our own in Egypt by 2000 B.C. Aside from a fragmentary story of a shepherd and a kind of fairy woman who keeps enticing him, nothing except this tale remains from this important era of Egyptian literature.

For the period around 1700 B.C. there exists one manuscript containing folktales. Though there are only three stories, they give the student of the folktale important information. For one thing we are told that Cheops, the builder of the great pyramid caused folktales to be told to him; and we are thus able to get our first historic view of story-telling as a human activity five thousand years ago. Moreover, the stories in the collection seem to contain very old tradition, since one of them explains the supernatural origin of three kings of the fifth dynasty, about a thousand years before the tale was written. Two of the stories are little more than accounts of magicians and their deeds—the magic creation of a giant crocodile to punish adultery, and the magic recovery of a lost ornament from the river—but the third is much like a modern wonder tale. A magician who eats and drinks enormously makes slain animals live but refuses to obey the king when he is commanded to try his powers on a human being. The king commands him to find “the castles of the god Thoth.” These (whatever they may be), the magician says, can be found in a chest in the temple of the sun god at Heliopolis, but can be obtained only by the eldest son of a priestess of the god Rē of Sakhbu who is pregnant with three children of that god. The story now goes over to the adventures of that woman. The children became the first three kings of the fifth dynasty.

The best-known Egyptian folktales come to us from the New Kingdom (about 1600 to 1000 B.C.). One is a tale of military strategy containing two well-known motifs. The opposing leader is deceived by the Egyptian general, who pretends to be willing to betray his army and who thus gets the enemy general into his tent and so much off his guard that he is easily overcome. The next day he pretends to send hundreds of sacks into the city as presents, but the sacks contain soldiers who overcome the city (the Trojan Horse motif, K754.1). Another fragment dealing with historic characters tells how the cries of the hippopotamuses of Egypt keep people awake 600 miles away (B741.2). This motif appears later in other parts of the world with the expected changes of place.

Another story from this period of the New Kingdom is about The Enchanted Prince. At the prince's birth it is prophesied that he will meet his death from a serpent, a crocodile, or a dog (M341.2.4.1). To forestall this fate he is confined to his tower (M372). When he grows up, however, he sets out on adventures and finds a king who will give his daughter in marriage to the suitor who can reach the princess's chamber, seventy ells above

the ground.³ Though the youth has introduced himself as the son of an army officer, the king is eventually informed of his identity and the marriage takes place. In later parts of the story the princess saves his life from a snake and he himself escapes from a crocodile. The tale breaks off without coming to the expected conclusion—his death in some way through the toy dog which he has kept. This tale as a whole has no exact modern parallels, though it contains several widely known motifs.

Better known is *The Two Brothers*, discovered in 1852 in a papyrus dating from about 1250 B.C. and once belonging to King Seti II. The story is given in great detail and is much like a modern folktale. There are two brothers. The elder, Anup, is married; the younger, Batu, lives in his house. The wife tries in vain to seduce Batu and then accuses him before her husband. Anup believes her and takes his knife and waits behind the stable door so as to kill his brother when he returns in the evening. But Batu, being warned by his cow, who speaks to him in human voice, flees and as he flees he calls for help to the sun god Rē. The god creates behind him a stream full of crocodiles, so that Anup cannot reach him. At sunrise Batu reveals to his brother the falseness of his wife and departs. He goes into the valley of cedars and hides his heart in a cedar flower. The nine gods give him the most beautiful of maidens, but the seven Hathors prophesy an evil end for her. The river carries a lock of her hair to Pharaoh, who is so taken with its perfume that he will not rest until he has her as wife. The thankless woman reveals the secret of her first husband and has the cedar flower cut down in which his heart is hidden. Then Batu falls down dead. But his elder brother sees that his beer foams up and he knows that his brother is in distress. He sets forth, finds the body and, after a long search, discovers the heart and places it in water and gives it to Batu to drink. The dead brother comes to life and begins to plan revenge. He turns himself into a bull, has his brother take him to the king's court and talks to the faithless wife. She has the bull killed but from two drops of his blood grow two peach trees. When the woman has these cut down, a splinter flies into her mouth and from this she bears a child, who is none other than Batu. He grows up as son of Pharaoh and succeeds him to the throne. Then he has the woman slain and calls his brother to share the kingdom with him.

Though this tale has some resemblance to the present day European story of *The Two Brothers*, the plot is essentially different and they probably do not have direct connection. C. W. von Sydow sees in it a corruption of an original Indo-European myth and finds parallels in Eastern Europe and Asia.⁴ But whether it is organically connected with any of the current tale types, it has many motifs that are a part of the common store of such tales:

³ A motif very close to the central theme of *The Princess on the Glass Mountain*, Type 530.

⁴ "Den fornegyptiska Sagan om de två Bröderna," *Yearbook of the New Society of Letters at Lund*, 1930, pp. 53-89.

Potiphar's wife (K2111); advice from speaking cow (B211); obstacle flight (the river separating the fugitive from his pursuer) (D672); separable soul (E710); evil prophecy (M340); love through sight of hair of unknown woman (T11.4.1); betrayal of husband's secret by his wife (K2213.4); life token: foaming beer (E761.6.4); resuscitation by replacing heart (E30); repeated reincarnation (E670); person transforms self, is swallowed and reborn in new form (E607.2). It is of great interest to the student of oral fiction to know that at least these themes were already developed as early as the thirteenth century before Christ.

Some indications of the presence of the oral tale in the later pre-Christian centuries are found in illustrations on papyrus, many of which have not been published.⁵ From these and from a few scattered texts we can conclude that the ancient Egyptians had a good number of animal tales, some of them, but not all, related to the Aesop fables.

Herodotus, writing in the middle of the fifth century B.C., has an interesting section on Egypt and recounts several stories he has heard there. One that is still told is The Treasure House of Rhampsinitus (Type 950)—the story of the architect who has left a stone loose in the treasury, of how the treasury is robbed and the thief escapes detection. Herodotus is skeptical of the truth of the story, but this fact has not kept it from surviving the vicissitudes of twenty-four centuries.

2. BABYLONIAN AND ASSYRIAN

HISTORIC records from the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates do not go back so far as those from the valley of the Nile, but even so they carry us into the past for a good five thousand years. From the ancient period with its interplay of Accadian, Sumerian, Chaldean, Assyrian, and Babylonian there remain an abundance of cuneiform writings, most of them from the latter part of the period. The texts consist largely of legal documents, business accounts, and religious writings.

It is the latter which interests the student of the folktale, for though we may be reasonably sure that the illiterate masses told and enjoyed stories during all these centuries and long before, these oral tales have left not a trace behind. But it may well be that nevertheless some reflection of this old folklore is to be found in the mythological texts which have come down to us. These stories, obviously written by a priesthood and in a style far removed from that of the story-teller of the folk, contain many motifs familiar to all students of the folktale, and they thus bear witness to the early development of many of these narrative themes.

Most interesting of these old stories is the epic of Gilgamesh,⁶ dating in its

⁵ *Handwörterbuch des deutschen Märchens*, I, 36; Bolte-Polívka, IV, 100.

⁶ For a list of Gilgamesh studies, see Bolte-Polívka, IV, 102, n. 1.

present form from about 650 B.C., but certainly going back to at least 2000 B.C. This epic contains the adventures of a strong hero (F610) and his friend; the death of the friend and the visit of Gilgamesh to the world of the dead (F81; E481.1) to interview the ghost. This world of the dead is found under the sea (F133) and is guarded by monsters (cf. F152.0.1). The reason for the visit to the otherworld is to learn from the dead the solution of certain riddles (cf. H1292). In the garden of the gods (A151.2) which he finds on the way, the trees bear jewels instead of fruit (F811.2.2). He is carried over into the world of the dead by a boatman (A672.1). In the lower world he obtains possession of a life-giving plant (D1346.5), but a serpent steals it back from him (cf. G303.3.3.15), so that never again will man be able to overcome death (cf. A1335).

In a kind of beast fable from the same early period, the tale of Etana,⁷ appear several motifs familiar in folklore all over the world, though there is certainly no necessity to suppose direct influence of this old tale on the folklore of modern Europe. The serpent complains to the sun god that the eagle has descended upon its young and has eaten them. On the advice of the god, the serpent hides in the carcass of an ox (K751.1) so that when the eagle flies down to eat of the carcass, the serpent catches him and breaks his wings. Later, however, when the hero Etana finds that his wife is about to die in childbirth, he frees and heals the eagle so that the great bird can carry him to heaven (B552; F62) where he may secure a marvelous healing plant (D1500.1.4). The eagle carries Etana so high that the earth seems no larger than a cake and the sea looks the size of a breadbasket. Before they reach the throne of Ishtar the eagle falls exhausted to the depth below.

Even more famous than the descent of Gilgamesh to the lower world is the myth of the descent of the goddess Ishtar (F85), but it is a question whether this myth is in any wise based upon an older popular tradition. As the goddess goes to the lower world of the dead she must pass a series of watchmen, and each of them demands of her a garment until, on her arrival in the otherworld, she is completely unveiled. Eventually, on her return, she receives back her garments one by one.

In addition to these three important myths, the folklorist is interested in a very old flood legend, parallel in many respects to the story of Noah. It seems to have influenced the Biblical tale, if not actually to be its original.⁸ Finally, he will discover that the very famous story of wise Achikar (H561.5)⁹ goes back to a papyrus text of about 420 B.C. referring to the minister of the Assyrian king Asarhaddon. This is the tale of the wise counselor who when

⁷ See Johnston, "Assyrian and Babylonian Beast Fables," *The American Journal of Semitic Languages*, XXVIII (1912), 81-100.

⁸ See p. 236, above. For a discussion of the mutual relations of these flood legends, see S. H. Langdon, *Semitic Mythology* (Boston, 1931), pp. 206-233.

⁹ See also J151.1. For a bibliography of the Achikar material, see, in addition to these motif numbers, Bolte-Polívka, IV, 104, n. 2.

he is condemned to death successfully hides and then, when the land is in peril, appears and saves it.

3. ANCIENT GREEK

FROM ancient Greece we have an abundance of literary records of almost every kind, but not a single attempt to preserve for us an authentic folktale as known and told by the ordinary Greek. The situation is much the same as with Biblical tradition:¹⁰ there is much evidence of the presence of many of our best-known folktale motifs and sometimes indication that many of the more elaborate narratives were known in much the form familiar to us in present-day folklore. But both in the Bible and in Greek literature these narratives are lifted from their natural homely surroundings and are made to serve the purposes sometimes of the writer of sacred books, sometimes of the epic poet, and sometimes even of the dramatist.

From casual references scattered throughout Greek literature we may be sure that something very close to the folktale as known among the peasantry of modern Europe was a part of the entertainment not only of children but of adults.¹¹ They are frequently spoken of as "old wives' tales," and as filled with all kinds of marvels, including a large array of frightful animals and ogres.

Much more about the real nature of the ancient Greek folktales can be inferred from the way in which they are handled in Greek literature. In spite of the fact that they are often adapted to an entirely different literary medium, it is frequently easy to recognize close analogies to modern folktales.¹² Sometimes, of course, the literary form may be the original from which a modern folktale has been developed, but a thorough study of the individual cases tends to show that normally the story as it appears in Greek literature is merely the adaptation of a popular Greek form of a folktale already well established in the world.¹³

There is much folktale material in Homer. Besides the Polyphemus episode, the whole series of adventures which Odysseus relates to the Phaeacians is laid in a world of wonders characteristic of the popular tale. Such are the

¹⁰ Many of these Biblical traditions have already been mentioned: The Garden of Eden, The Flood, and various explanatory legends (pp. 235ff.), Ruth, Susanna, Daniel, Jonah, Solomon, Moses, and Joseph (pp. 266ff.). For the Apochryphal story of Tobit, see Type 507B, above. For references to later Jewish legends, essentially literary, see p. 266, above.

¹¹ Ample evidence on this point has been assembled; see Bolte-Polívka, IV, 41ff.

¹² In his *Griechische und albanesische Märchen* (Leipzig, 1864), von Hahn classifies modern folktales on the basis of their resemblance to ancient Greek myths. The comparisons are often interesting, but the kind of direct relationship which he assumes is in most cases certainly not actual.

¹³ Mention has already been made of the story of Oedipus (Type 931), of Rhampsinitus (Type 950), of The Wolf and the Kids (Type 123), coming respectively from Sophocles, Herodotus, Aesop, and Homer.

harpies (B52); the sirens (B53); the enchantress Circe, who transforms his men (G263.1); the journey to the world of the dead (F81); the successive transformations of Proteus, the old man of the sea (G311); and the lotus flower that causes his companions to forget the homeward way (D1365.1.1). The *Iliad*, too, has its folktale motifs. For such, certainly, is Achilles' horse which speaks and advises him (B211.3); the war between the pygmies and the cranes (F535.5.1); and especially the tale of Bellerophon, containing as it does the motif of the hero falsely accused by the queen of attempting her honor (the Potiphar's wife motif, K2111), the letter sent to a neighboring king ordering the hero's execution (Uriah letter motif, K978), and the winning of a princess as a reward for overcoming monsters (T68).

In the myths which arose around the figure of Heracles we have many analogies to modern tales of the deeds of the strong man (Type 650). By his precocious strength, manifested already in the cradle, he overcomes the marvelous serpent, and later performs the whole series of "labors" in which he overcomes monsters, secures the golden apples, strikes off the hydra's nine heads, and brings Cerberus from hell. Some of these deeds are paralleled in the legend of Theseus, who also performs great feats of strength. Particularly like adventures in folktales is the defeat of the minotaur in King Minos's labyrinth where Theseus is helped by the king's daughter Ariadne (G530.2). Another widely used motif in the Theseus story is the substitution of the sails on the ship, the color of which was to announce the good or bad news from the voyage (Z130.1).

On the legend of Perseus, Hartland wrote a three-volume study¹⁴ in which he made comparisons with folktales in all parts of the world, as well as with many primitive customs and beliefs. He equated this legend with the present-day folktale of The Dragon Slayer and its related tale, The Two Brothers (Types 300 and 303). It cannot be assumed that the modern tale was definitely built upon the Perseus tradition, though no one would deny that there is a relationship of some kind between them, for certainly the Greek legend of Perseus has many analogies to these tales and others in modern folklore. The supernatural birth of the hero (T511), his abandonment and persecution along with his mother (S301), the theft of the single eye belonging to the Phorides (K333.2), the overcoming of Medusa in spite of her power of turning people to stone through her glance (D581), and, finally, the winning of the princess Andromeda as a prize for defeating the sea monster to whom she was to be sacrificed (T68.1), all show us that we are here very close to a narrative form and to narrative material familiar to us in the modern folktale of the European peasant.

A considerable series of folktale motifs appears in the tale of the Argonauts.¹⁵ Phrixos and Helle flee from the persecutions of their stepmother, as

¹⁴ *The Legend of Perseus*.

¹⁵ See Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica*.

in several modern tales (cf. Type 450). We also find a goddess appearing to Jason in the winter in the form of an old woman so as to put his kindness to a test. Like Saint Christopher with the Christ Child, he puts her on his shoulders and carries her across the stream.¹⁶ In Jason's fellow voyagers is to be found a good example of a very popular motif, that of the extraordinary companions.¹⁷ In a part of the Argonauts story, that dealing with Jason and Medea, we have many interesting parallels to one of the most widespread of modern European tales, *The Girl as Helper on the Hero's Flight* (Type 313). As in that tale, Medea, through her magic power, helps Jason perform the impossible tasks which have been assigned by her father. The lovers flee and throw behind themselves obstacles to delay pursuit. In this case the obstacles are not magic; for Medea throws, one by one, the members of her slain brother, Apsyrtos into the sea. Later Jason abandons Medea for another wife. The obstacle flight (D672) and the forgotten fiancée (D2003) of the modern folktale are at least clearly suggested by this train of incidents.¹⁸

In two Greek tales we have the incident of the bride being given to the winner of a race. King Oenomaos tries to discourage the suitors of his daughter Hippodamia by himself challenging them to a race (H331.5.2) and displaying before his palace many poles, each bearing the head of an unsuccessful contender (H901.1). Both of these motifs are found in modern tales (particularly Type 329), as well as in literary treatments both Oriental and western.¹⁹ The other suitor race in which Atalanta, the athletic maiden, is tricked by the hero into stopping for the apples which he throws (H331.5.1.1), seems not to have entered modern folklore in just that form.

Such are only the most striking of the tales in classical Greek literature which show motifs familiar in modern folklore. A search through the entire field of ancient literature and art would certainly double the number of such motifs. Bolte calls attention to various sources in which are found: the escape by exchanging caps on the heads of the ogre's children (K1611); the learning of animal languages by having one's ears licked by a snake (B165.1.1); the identification of the heroine by her lost slipper (H36.1); the fool who tries to count the waves of the sea (cf. J311.1); the coin which keeps returning to the owner (Type 745; D1602.11, cf. N211); magic wishing rings (D1470.1.15); magic seats which hold one fast (D1413.5); and magic self-supplying tables (D1472.1.7).²⁰ In addition to these, we have already noticed several legends attached to the names of particular persons, real or

¹⁶ We have here an analogue not only to the Christopher story (Q25), but also to the much more general series of tales in which the gods or saints visit mortals in disguise (K1811).

¹⁷ Cf. Types 513 and 514. These men, each endowed with some remarkable power (supernatural sight, hearing, speed, or the like), appear not only in modern folklore, but in the older written literature of such widely divergent places as Wales and India.

¹⁸ For a good discussion of these relations, see Sven Liljeblad, "Argonauterna och sagorna om flykten från trollet," *Saga och Sed*, 1935, pp. 29 ff.

¹⁹ For a good discussion of this motif, see Bolte-Polívka, III, 368.

²⁰ See Bolte-Polívka, IV, 113 ff.

fictional. Such are the stories about King Midas, about Orpheus and his descent to Hades, and about the Ring of Polycrates.²¹

The Greeks doubtless had many popular stories about animals. Most of these found their way into the cycle of Aesopic fables and early received literary form. In this way they were carried over into the Middle Ages, and many of them entered so thoroughly into the stream of oral folklore that their literary source has been forgotten.²²

4. LATIN

THESE old stories of the Greeks are frequently best known to the modern world through their appearance in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. This gifted writer of the very beginning of the Christian era and end of the old brought together a great variety of stories out of the old mythology. Many of these have familiar folktale motifs, and all of them contain marvels of a kind; for the general principle determining his choice of stories is the presence of some transformation which accounts for present-day conditions in the lives of animals or men.²³ Yet with all this affinity to folk belief, Ovid is far removed in his narrative manner from the traditional folktale. He has taken old myths, themselves perhaps sophisticated reworkings of older folklore, and has brought them back into a new secular atmosphere even farther removed from what they must once have been.

Nor can real folktales be found in Virgil. The visit to the lower world in the sixth book of the *Aeneid* is little more than an imitation of a similar journey in the *Odyssey*. If Virgil knew about story-telling among Italian shepherds of his day, he gives no sign of it in his *Eclogues*.

We must come down a full century after these Augustan writers before we find the track of a real folktale, and then Latin literature does give us one beautiful example of a story widely known in present-day folklore. This is the tale of Cupid and Psyche, which appears in the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius, who wrote in the early part of the second century of our era. This tale appears in a framework of adventures which itself is common in folklore. The hero is transformed into an ass, but keeps his human intelligence, and has many interesting and exciting adventures before he is finally restored.²⁴ Among other things, he hears an old woman tell the tale of Cupid and Psyche—how Venus is incensed at the beauty and fame of Psyche, how she brings a curse upon the marriage of her son Cupid to the girl, and of how, after long wandering, the couple are reunited.²⁵ The tale has most of the elements of

²¹ For these, see pp. 265f., above.

²² For the literary fable, see p. 218, above.

²³ For a discussion of tales of this kind, see p. 242, above.

²⁴ Cf. Type 567 for a similar transformation.

²⁵ See Type 425A, pp. 98ff., above.

the present-day folk story: the jealous sisters, the prohibition against seeing the miraculous husband, the dripping candle, the tasks which must be performed by the heroine, and the helpers she meets on the way. But this whole folk story is taken over into the atmosphere of ancient mythology so that, if we did not have our analogues in the folklore of today, we might never guess that we have here what certainly appears to be a real tale of the Italian and Greek countryside under Marcus Aurelius. It is an interesting question whether just this process of transformation of authentic folktales into myths through the efforts of priests and poets may not have been of prime importance in the development of the great mythologies.

However this may be, Apuleius was certainly familiar with the folk tradition, and bears witness to the existence of at least one highly developed tale in his generation. For the later centuries of the ancient Roman Empire, however, we have nothing more of the kind. It is only with the rise of the power of the Christian church and the growth of its legends of saints and martyrs that we again begin to see signs in literature of the presence of old and persistent narrative tradition among the common folk.

It is not the purpose of this study to enter into a discussion of the great literary collections of tales. Much of the narrative activity among the learned of the Middle Ages can be fairly well guessed by the contents of various kinds of written tale compilations. Some of these go back to the Orient, such as the various derivatives of the *Panchatantra*, the cycle of the *Seven Sages*, and some of the material we now know in the *Thousand and One Nights*. Many Oriental themes also appear elsewhere, mingled with strictly western material. Some of the special literary forms of the Middle Ages particularly adapted to the use of folklore were the saints' legends; the exempla, used by priests for illustrations of their sermons; the fabliaux; the novelle; and the somewhat later jestbooks.

Not only many influences of the folktale, but also occasionally actual versions of such tales appear in some of the earlier medieval literary classics written in the vernacular. From this point of view particularly interesting to the folktale student are the Old English poem of Beowulf, many of the Icelandic sagas, and a considerable number of the medieval romances, particularly the so-called Breton Lais. But in all these literary treatments, folktales are merely taken as bases for artistic reworking, now in one narrative style and now in another. This attitude towards the folktale persists even in such a good collection of authentic popular tales as Basile's in the seventeenth century, and gave way to faithful recording of the actual words of the traditional story-teller only about a hundred years ago.